

The Apostles' Creed: A Dangerous Ecumenical Distortion of True Biblical Christianity

by Jeremy James



It will likely come as a surprise to most professing Christians to hear anyone describe the Apostles' Creed as a distortion. How can a statement of faith which has allegedly been in existence since the 2nd century AD be considered a distortion? In what way does it depart from the tenets of true Christian doctrine?

The answer may be summed up in just one word – ambiguity.

The Apostles' Creed is little more than a loose compendium of statements about the main tenets of Christianity. And to the extent that these statements are loose, they are dangerous.

To see more clearly why this is so, we need to take a brief look at its historical origin.

The Apostles' Creed in history

According to the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, the Apostles' Creed first appeared around AD 140 in a fairly primitive form and had settled into its existing, more developed form by the 7th century. It is thought to have been used during the baptismal rite, when professing Christians would recite within the hearing of other Christians the beliefs they now held as new converts. It was mainly an affirmation of one's belief in Christ as the only begotten son of God and in the Trinitarian nature of the Godhead.

As you can see, it was not intended to be a formal doctrinal statement but a simple public declaration of one's Christian faith. However, over time it hardened into something it was never intended to be. Christians began to view it instead as an 'official' summary of the Gospel, possessing almost scriptural force.

Some commentators have tried to show that the Creed was formulated by the Apostles themselves and only appeared in written form at a much later date because it had been kept secret from the eyes and ears of the profane. However, this was just an imaginative attempt to justify the almost canonical standing that the creed had come to possess over time.

The Reformation didn't change this. Despite their zeal in tackling the welter of false doctrines in Catholic theology, both Luther and Calvin continued to hold the Creed in high esteem. As a result, it has survived intact to this day among many different groups of professing Christians – Lutherans (and their Anglican and Episcopalian counterparts), Methodists, Presbyterians, Nazarenes and others.

The Apostles' Creed

from the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* (1662)

I believe in God the Father Almighty,
Maker of heaven and earth:
And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord,
Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,
Born of the Virgin Mary,
Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, dead, and buried:
He descended into hell;
The third day he rose again from the dead;
He ascended into heaven,
And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty;
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Ghost;
The holy Catholick Church;
The Communion of Saints;
The Forgiveness of sins;
The Resurrection of the body,
And the Life everlasting.
Amen.

The sinister ecumenical agenda

The status of the Creed would not be of great concern to us today were it not for the way it is being used to promote the Ecumenical agenda. The Roman Catholic Church has been working aggressively for decades to subvert true Bible-based 'Protestant' churches and lure them back into the Roman fold. The drive to unify the many different Christian denominations under a single banner – a program known as *Ecumenism* – depends very much on emphasizing what they all have in common (or appear to have in common) and ignoring the differences. This is why many high-profile Christian preachers and leaders, like Billy Graham, are describing Roman Catholics as fellow Christians. These men are part of the worldwide Ecumenical program, designed and managed by the Vatican, which is aiming to produce in due course a unified global Christian church with the Pope at its head.

Any Bible-believing Christian should see this for what it is – a dangerous deception. But because many Bible-**believing** Christians today are not Bible-**reading** Christians, they lack the basic knowledge and discernment that are needed to repel this cunning assault on true Christianity. They can't see that Billy Graham is leading them over a cliff. They can't see that the Purpose Driven Church – invented by Rick Warren – teaches a sickly imitation of the gospel message. They can't see that innovators like Bill Hybels, Benny Hinn, Mark Driscoll, Brian McLaren and the rest are teaching, at best, an empty ecumenical gospel and, in many instances, downright apostasy.

Perhaps this short paper will help to open their eyes.

The Apostles' Creed is being exploited by the Ecumenical movement to create a set of common Christian beliefs. A simple baptismal declaration from the 7th century or thereabouts is being cunningly transformed into a foundational statement of Christian theology, a platform on which professing Christians of all denominations can congregate and proclaim their unity.

The ambiguity of the Apostles' Creed allows it to be exploited for ecumenical purposes. If a statement dealing with an abstract matter is overly simplified or poorly defined, it is generally open to many different interpretations and liable to be skewed in one direction or another. And, unfortunately, the Apostles' Creed is ideal for this purpose.

Let's see why.

The Ecumenical version of the Apostles' Creed

In its report, *Praying Together*, published in 1988, the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC) included an ecumenical version of the Apostles' Creed for use by Christian churches of every denomination. Even though there were very few differences between the versions already in use, this ecumenical version represented a giant leap forward. Having been produced through consultation and agreement among the various churches, under the auspices of the ELLC, it constituted a kind of universal statement of faith for professing Christians everywhere. Roman Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists – all could stand shoulder to shoulder and proclaim their unity.

The ELLC was founded in 1985, being an amalgamation of the International Commission on English in the Liturgy – a Roman Catholic agency with a permanent secretariat – and ecumenical representatives on liturgical matters from “the major Christian Churches” in the English-speaking world. In effect, the ELLC version of the Apostles’ Creed was conceived and sponsored by Rome and then presented to the liberal Protestant churches for approval (See text below).

The Apostles’ Creed

Version by the English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

So what can possibly be wrong with the Apostles’ Creed or its adoption by the liberal Protestant churches?

If we go through it line by line we will quickly see the problem:

LINE 1: *I believe in God, the Father almighty*

This is far too vague and seriously flawed. Many religions believe in ‘God’ and some conceive of their deity as an almighty father, like Zeus or Jupiter. The Roman Catholic Church now teaches that the Moslem god Allah and the LORD God of the Bible are the same – which is blasphemy of the worst kind. The *Catholic Catechism*, paragraph 841, states: “The plan of salvation also includes those who acknowledge the Creator, in the first place amongst whom are the Muslims; these profess to hold the faith of Abraham, and together with us they adore the one, merciful God, mankind's judge on the last day.” This outrageous perversion must be rejected.

The Koran firmly declares that God has no Son and that Christ did not die on the cross. It utterly rejects the deity of Christ and the glorious truth of the Holy Trinity. It also repeatedly attacks both Jews and Christians as infidels. The ‘god’ of the Koran is the moon god, *Allah*, one of the many gods worshipped among the pagan tribes of ancient Arabia. His symbol is the crescent moon, which is placed on the pinnacle of mosques everywhere, thus marking them out as temples of worship to the Moon God.

Allah is the enemy of YAHWEH and hates him with a bitter hatred. This is why Moslems incessantly chant *Allahu Akbar*, meaning their god is absolute and YAHWEH, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – the God of the Jews and the Christians – is an impostor. They chant it incessantly and with great fervour because they are trying to convince themselves that it is true, when in their hearts they know it is not.

Why does Rome support the heresy that Allah and YAHWEH are the same? Because Rome too is apostate, a wolf in sheep’s clothing, a long-time enemy of true Biblical Christianity and completely dedicated to its destruction.

The line should read:

I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, LORD God Almighty

LINE 2: creator of heaven and earth

This leaves the door wide open to progressive creation and theistic evolution, as well as other interpretations at odds with the plain meaning of Genesis and the Six Day Creation. The line should read:

Creator in the beginning of heaven and earth and all that dwell therein

LINE 3: I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord

This is inaccurate. Jesus Christ is the only *begotten* Son of God the Father. All believers are sons of the Father by adoption. The line should read

I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God the Father

It should be obvious after only three lines that there is something seriously wrong with the Apostles’ Creed. These defects alone should cause all Christians to reject it, but there are many more, as we shall see.

LINE 4: who was conceived by the Holy Spirit

This is dangerously vague. Many religious traditions believe in a ‘spirit’ and believe it to be holy or sacred. At an interfaith conference in Assisi, Italy, in 1986, which had over 160 representatives from different world religions, Pope John Paul II publicly endorsed the ‘spirit’ of other, non-Biblical traditions, including Buddhism and Animism (shamanism). The event was repeated in 2002 and 2011, each time in Assisi, under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church.

The line should read

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Third Person of the Holy Trinity

LINE 5: *born of the Virgin Mary*

There is a problem here. Nowhere in scripture is the human mother of Jesus referred to by the term *Virgin Mary*. The term leaves open the possibility that she was a virgin all her life or that her virginity was unlike the virginity of other women. It also fails to identify the woman as a descendant of the house of David, as prophesied in scripture. Following the revised version of line 4, it should read

in the womb of a virgin woman of the house of David in accordance with the scriptures



Pope John Paul II prays with representatives of other religions, including the Dalai Lama, at Assisi, 1986. In any room where non-Christians prayed, all of the crosses of Calvary were removed, and the crosses which could not be removed were covered.

See additional photos in Appendix A.

LINE 6: *suffered under Pontius Pilate*

This line is devoid of theological content. Many men suffered under the Roman Governor named Pontius Pilate. Christ's suffering was unique because he was sinless and the only begotten Son of God. He suffered in our place, on our behalf.

LINE 7: *was crucified, died, and was buried*

Again, this is vague and lacking in theological force. Many men were crucified unto death. What matters is that Christ was crucified, died and buried in our place. This is the substitutionary atonement without which no man is saved. These two lines (6 and 7) should read:

*was scourged, crucified, died and was buried in my place to atone
in full, once and for all, for my sins*

LINE 8: *he descended into hell*

This is misleading because it seems to suggest that Christ went at death to the place of the damned. He did not. The Greek word for hell in the New Testament is *hades*. Hades is divided into two parts, paradise – where the souls of the righteous dead resided – and ‘hell’, where the souls of the eternally damned resided (and still reside). Christ descended into the paradise part of *hades* to announce to the righteous dead the good news of their liberation. His suffering and humiliation ended at the cross.

His last words on the cross included the statement, “Tetelestai”, a Greek term meaning ‘It is finished.’ Payment was made in full at the moment of his death. The line should read:

he descended into the abode of the righteous dead

LINE 9: *On the third day he rose again*

Surprisingly, this too is seriously deficient. It fails to state that Christ was now bodily glorified. His body had become immortal and would never die. He was the first fruits of God's astonishing redemptive plan. It should also be recorded that the resurrection was in accordance with scripture. The line should read:

*on the third day he rose again, bodily glorified, in accordance with
the scriptures*

LINE 10: *he ascended into heaven*

This is alright.

LINE 11: *he is seated at the right hand of the Father*

This is deficient since it omits a vitally important fact, namely that Christ is actively involved every moment in the life of every believer. Something of such importance should never be omitted! The line should read:

*he is seated at the right hand of the Father where he intercedes
continually on behalf of the saints*

LINE 12: *and he will come to judge the living and the dead*

This omits a fact of the utmost importance, namely that the just will live forever with the LORD and the unjust will be condemned to outer darkness forever. The existing statement leaves open the possibility that a place like purgatory may exist, which is central to the false theology of the Roman Catholic Church. The line should read:

and he will come again to judge the living and the dead, the just unto everlasting life and the unjust unto eternal damnation

LINE 13: *I believe in the Holy Spirit*

This is too weak. The believer is sealed by the Holy Spirit. The third person of the Holy Trinity dwells within him as an earnest of his salvation. The line should read:

I believe and rejoice that I am sealed by the Holy Spirit

LINE 14: *[I believe in] the holy catholic Church*

This is a mischievous statement by any reckoning. The word ‘catholic’ is meant to have a technical meaning here, namely ‘universal’, but it could be taken to denote the Roman Catholic Church in some wider, ecumenical sense. Even if a restricted interpretation is applied, it still conveys little that is clearly scriptural.

One must ask what the original authors (whoever they were) intended to convey by this statement? The church is the body of Christ, the congregation or *ekklesia* of saints (believers), whether living or dead, who were saved after Pentecost. It is invisible and not institutional, comprising only those who are born again in Christ and not the indiscriminate totality of all who merely profess to be Christian.

The line also omits the imminent return of Christ for his bride, a doctrine of great significance. In light of this the line should read:

*I believe in the church, the body and bride of Christ,
and her imminent translation*

LINE 15: *[I believe in] the communion of saints*

Another ambiguous and potentially dangerous statement. The word ‘communion’ (which has the same root as *communicate*) implies an ability among its members to communicate with one another in some manner. Since many of the saints are dead, this wording leaves open the possibility that the living saints can communicate in some manner with those who have died, and vice versa. This is perfectly compatible with Roman Catholic theology, but to any Bible-believing Christian it is nothing but necromancy.

Having regard to the revision of line 14, this line should be replaced by the following:

and in the resurrection in glorified bodies of the righteous dead

LINE 16: [I believe in] the forgiveness of sins

Many religious traditions believe in the forgiveness of sins or the cancellation of bad debts or karma, as in Hinduism and Buddhism.

The line should read:

in the forgiveness of sins through the shed blood of Christ on the Cross

LINE 17: [I believe in] the resurrection of the body

This is far too vague. Some branches of paganism believe in the revival of the dead or the infusion of life into dead matter. The line should read the same as line 15 (revised).

LINE 18: and the life everlasting.

Again, too vague. Even atheists believe in the possibility of life everlasting once science has advanced to the stage where ageing and cell-death can be prevented, or synthetic organs developed. Evolutionists also believe in the spontaneous emergence of life from inanimate matter. The line should read:

*and in the eternal and joyous communion of the saints thereafter
with Jesus Christ Our Lord and Saviour*

Missing truths

There are many other doctrinal truths which could be included, but there are at least four which should be included, not only because they are a source of tremendous strength and joy to all believers, but because they highlight the magnitude and mercy of the LORD's wonderful plan of redemption:

- o *the sole authority and inerrancy of the Bible*
- o *salvation by faith alone in Christ alone through grace alone*
- o *the full adoption by God the Father of all the saints*
- o *the coming Millennial reign of Christ on earth from the throne of David in Jerusalem.*

If we insert the missing truths in appropriate places, we arrive at a 'Creed' which differs markedly from the anemic, misleading, and potentially dangerous ecumenical version being touted by the Vatican:

Revised Version – for illustrative purposes only

*I believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, LORD God Almighty,
Creator in the beginning of heaven and earth and all that dwell therein.
I believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God the Father,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Third Person of the Holy Trinity,
in the womb of a virgin woman of the house of David
in accordance with the scriptures.*

*I believe that Jesus Christ was scourged, crucified, died and was buried
in my place to atone in full, once and for all, for my sins;
that he descended into the abode of the righteous dead
and on the third day rose again, bodily glorified, in accordance
with the scriptures.*

*I believe he is seated at the right hand of the Father where he intercedes
continually on behalf of the saints
and that he will come again to judge the living and the dead, the just unto
everlasting life and the unjust unto eternal damnation.*

I believe and rejoice that I am sealed by the Holy Spirit.

I believe in the sole authority and inerrancy of the Bible,
in the forgiveness of sins through the shed blood of Christ on the Cross,
in salvation by faith alone in Christ alone through grace alone,
and in the full adoption by God the Father of all the saints.*

*I believe in the church, the body and bride of Christ,
and her imminent translation,***

*in the coming Millennial reign of Christ on earth
from the throne of David in Jerusalem,
in the resurrection in glorified bodies of the righteous dead,
and in the eternal and joyous communion of the saints thereafter
with Jesus Christ Our Lord and Saviour. Amen.*

* Comprising 39 books of the Old Testament and 27 books of the New Testament.

** *Harpazo* in Greek. Also called the Rapture.

Doctrinal Minefield

In an age of great apostasy the Apostles' Creed is a doctrinal minefield. For any true believer, the only creed is the Bible itself. All other creeds, however well intentioned, are but human formulations and thus infinitely deficient beside the Word of God. The revised version set out above is **not** intended as a substitute for the Apostles' Creed, but is cited merely as an illustration of just how far it – the Apostles' Creed – falls short of expressing, in a doctrinally sound manner, the truths it purports to address.

True Christians ought to recognize just how dangerous the Ecumenical movement really is. Referring to scripture as a whole, and to the Book of Revelation in particular, Alva McClain said, “The only genuine example of an ecumenical organization of religion on earth appears in the great harlot of chapter 17” (*The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p.446). This “ecumenical organization” is the very one that the Roman Catholic Church is seeking to establish.

Rome wants control – complete control. Her goal has never changed, namely, to reverse the Reformation and destroy true Biblical Christianity. The Anathemas of the Council of Trent (1545-63) still stand and the black heart that framed them is still beating.

The Apostles’ Creed is being used as part of her grand strategy to yoke together the various Christian denominations. All the indications are that the leaders of the Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches are fully prepared to let Rome have her way. But will the Baptists and Evangelicals succumb also? Will they too allow the Roman Catholic Church to infiltrate their ranks and corrode them from within? If they continue down the Ecumenical road this is exactly what will happen.

By evasion, vagueness and subtlety, Ecumenism eats away at the core of true, Bible-believing Christianity – the inerrancy of the Bible, salvation by faith alone, the complete once-for-all sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross, the security of salvation, the priesthood of the saints, the Rapture of the church, the coming Millennial reign of Christ, and the *complete rejection* in any form of such false Roman doctrines as Marian worship, communication with the dead, the exercise of sacramental powers, the sacrifice of the mass, the existence of purgatory, and infant baptism.

Ecumenism is a manmade version of Christianity. It replaces godly believers with ‘nice people’, pastoral judgement with tolerance, and doctrinal accuracy with vagueness. It replaces eternal damnation with punishment, prayer with meditation and vain repetition, obedience with conformity, and repentance with regret. It replaces the sanctifying gospel with the social gospel, personal holiness with good intentions, and a God-fearing attitude with self-esteem. And, incredibly, it replaces the existential curse of sin with personal frailty.

When the Evangelicals set aside the principle of Separation in the 1940s, their subsequent downward slide was inevitable. Rather than living in respectful separation from heretics, pagans and friends of the world, they chose instead to move among them and ignore their true spiritual standing before a sin-hating God. They mistakenly thought this ‘minor’ compromise would bring more sinners to Christ, but it only served to poison their own well.

Having abandoned biblical Separation, they are now embracing Ecumenism, which is nothing less than affiliation with Rome and her wanton parody of true Christianity.

In his autobiography, *Just As I Am* (1997), Billy Graham said, “My goal, I always made clear, was not to preach against Catholic beliefs or to proselytize people who were already committed to Christ within the Catholic Church. Rather, it was to proclaim the gospel to all those who had never truly committed their lives to Christ.” (p.357).

During an interview on *Larry King Live* in January 1997, King asked him, “You like this Pope?” Billy Graham replied, “I like him very much...He and I agree on almost everything.” Take a look at the photos of Pope John Paul II in this paper – the Pope to whom Graham refers – and ask yourself whether Baptist and Evangelical pastors have lost their sanity? What has happened to Biblical discernment, to godly separation from apostasy, heresy and lies? Have they forgotten all about the ‘grievous wolves’ who even now are working in their midst, clad sweetly and benignly in sheep’s clothing?

The False Goal of Ecumenism

Ecumenism claims to seek the unification of Christianity, but this is an empty, misguided endeavour. To say that the church, the body of Christ, is not already unified is to deny Christ.

The church comprises all professing Christians who are born again in Christ. It is not a visible institutional entity, but an invisible body, a living unity, with Christ at its head.

Ecumenism is nothing but a sinister trick to bring about some form of institutional unity between the various Christian denominations worldwide, with the Pope at its head.

Its great catch-cry is, ‘In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty’, but the Bible **never** makes a distinction of this kind. We are enjoined by scripture to uphold ALL the Word of God, not just those parts which seem to us to carry the greatest doctrinal significance. Not only do we lack a scriptural basis for deciding between ‘essentials’ and ‘non-essentials’, but as fallen sinners we are not even qualified to try.

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on true Biblical Christianity visit
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APPENDIX A

The Pope, the head of the Roman Catholic Church, is also the head of the Ecumenical Movement.

These two photos show how dangerous Ecumenism really is and how much compromise it involves.

In the first photo Pope John Paul II is receiving a red *tilak* mark on his forehead, in honour of the Hindu god, Shiva. To receive the mark of Shiva is to submit to the deity concerned, which is an act of worship.

In the second photo we see the same Pope receiving a delegation of Voodoo priests and later remarking that he prayed with them.

Voodoo is black magic and Shiva is one of the many faces of Satan. What does this tell you about ecumenism and where it will ultimately lead?



Pope John Paul II receiving the mark of the Hindu god Shiva on February 2, 1986



Pope John Paul II has an audience with Voodoo priests in 1985. They were invited to pray and worship with him at Assisi in October, 1986. The Pope is quoted as follows in the official Vatican newspaper: "Particularly noteworthy was the prayer meeting at the sanctuary of Our Lady of Mercy at Lake Togo where, for the first time, I also prayed with a group of Animists." (*L'Osservatore Romano*, August 26, 1985, p.9)